



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

High Desert District  
Rock Springs Field Office  
280 Highway 191 North  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901



In Reply Refer To:  
4700 (WYD04)

DEC 20 2010

## **Scoping Statement Divide Basin Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) Population Management Action**

### **Description of Project**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rock Springs Field Office proposes to gather excess wild horses from the Divide Basin HMA. The most recent population survey revealed approximately 1,004 wild horses residing within the HMA (see attached map). Census data for this HMA were collected April 14-15, 2010, and wild horse populations are exceeding the appropriate management level (AML) established for this HMA. The AML range for the Divide Basin HMA is 415-600 wild horses as identified in the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The gather operations would include Helicopter Drive Trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. Gathering is not currently scheduled but will be scheduled to start after July 1, 2011. The project may utilize a fertility control vaccine and skew the male/female sex ratios.

### **Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents**

The proposed action is in conformance with the Green River RMP approved on August 8, 1997.

The Green River RMP objectives for management of wild horses are to: 1) protect, maintain, and control viable, healthy herds of wild horses while retaining their free-roaming nature; 2) provide adequate habitat for free-roaming wild horses through management consistent with principles of multiple use and environmental protection; and 3) provide opportunity for the public to view wild horses. Gathering and removal of excess wild horses from the Divide Basin HMA is in conformance with the Green River RMP. Wild horse numbers, that were agreed upon with private land owners and wild horse advocacy groups were addressed in developing the Green River RMP. Wild horse HMAs were established or confirmed through the Green River RMP planning process.

The proposed management action is in conformance with the August 2003 Consent Decree upheld by the United States District Court of Wyoming. The Consent Decree is an out of court settlement agreement between the State of Wyoming and the United States Department of the Interior; and the BLM. This agreement specifies that when information is gathered that indicates that an HMA within the State of Wyoming is determined to be over the established AML, the BLM has one year from discovery to remove wild horses to the low range of AML.

## **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, which implement NEPA, the BLM is required to prepare an environmental analysis. The environmental document will serve several purposes. It will provide both the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; identify all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project. The document will be prepared by an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of BLM resource specialists.

One essential element of the NEPA process is scoping. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental analysis; identify environmental issues of concern related to the proposed gather; determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the environmental document; and identify potential mitigation.

Known resource issues or potential conflicts include: recreational activities such as hunting, wildlife and wild horse viewing; special status plant species; wildlife, and special status wildlife species; historic trails; oil and gas drilling and utility construction; fertility control vaccine; and livestock grazing.

This scoping statement has been prepared to describe means by which governmental agencies, the general public, and other interested parties may participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

### **Timing Requirements**

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process to help in identifying the level of analysis needed, alternatives to the proposed action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process.

Your comments are important and will be considered in the Environmental Analysis process.

**Comments are due by January 21, 2011.** Please note that public comments submitted for this scoping review, including names, e-mail addresses, and street addresses of the respondents will be available for public review and disclosure at the address below during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Please submit your comments to:

Jay D'Ewart, Wild Horse & Burro Specialist  
BLM Rock Springs Field Office  
280 Highway 191 North  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901-3447

Fax: (307) 352-0329

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**Only electronic comments sent to the following email address will be considered:**

**DivideBasin\_HMA\_WY@blm.gov**

(Please include **"Divide Basin Scoping Comments"** in the subject line.)

Public comments are most helpful if the comments are specific. The regulations (40 CFR 1503.36) state that "comments on a proposed action shall be as specific as possible and may address either the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed or both." The most valuable comments are those that cite specific actions or impacts in the document and offer informed analysis of what is presented.

This Scoping statement and all other future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM Wyoming website at:

**[http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/rsfdocs/divide\\_basin.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/rsfdocs/divide_basin.html)**

The website can be accessed by the general public. The environmental analysis document will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated. The estimated time of posting the document is March 1, 2011. You may also obtain a paper copy of this document by contacting the Rock Springs Field Office at the address or phone number above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lance C. Porter".

Lance C. Porter  
Field Manager

Enclosure

# Divide Basin Herd Management Area April 14-15, 2010

## 1,004 Wild Horses Counted

